



**Board of Education
Superintendent Report
Monday, July 13, 2026**

Hello Members of the Board and Lawrence Public Schools Community,

As we convene the organizational meeting of the Board this evening and mark one month today until the official first day of school on August 13th, excitement is building as we prepare to launch this 2026-27 school year.

I am pleased to share the following highlights from across Lawrence Public Schools.

Students Perform Across Europe

This summer, **Free State High School Band Director Eric Bradshaw** joined 100 talented student musicians from across Kansas on the [Kansas Ambassadors of Music \(Star of Kansas\) European Concert Tour](#).

Five Free State High School band students represented Lawrence Public Schools while performing alongside choir, band, and orchestra students **in England, France, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany**.

The experience provided students with the opportunity to perform internationally while serving as cultural ambassadors through music.

We are so proud of these students and extend our appreciation to Eric Bradshaw for his continued commitment to ensure extraordinary learning experiences for students beyond the four walls of the classroom.

Additional details: In addition to performing with the ensembles, Bradshaw conducted the concert band during performances throughout the tour. This marked his ninth international tour as a staff member with the Ambassadors of Music program, and his fourth representing Kansas. The Kansas Ambassadors of Music European tour is held every two years and brings together outstanding student musicians and music educators from across the state for an international performance experience.

Students and Educators Recognized at Kansas Choral Directors Association Convention

Lawrence Public Schools students and educators were well represented at last week's [Kansas Choral Directors Association \(KCDA\) Summer Convention](#), hosted by the University of Kansas.

Two students—one from Lawrence High School and one from Free State High School—were selected to perform in the [Jazz Honor Choir](#), an elite ensemble featuring just 11 students from across Kansas.

Additionally, 29 students from both high schools performed as members of the convention's 100-voice Honor Choir.

We also congratulate **Joshua East, Free State High School Choir Director** and **Rachel Naughtin, Lawrence High School Choir Director**, who were recognized by [KCDA](#) for their volunteer leadership in helping make the statewide event possible.

We invite everyone to enjoy a brief video highlighting the incredible talent of these student performers.

West Middle School Student Earns National History Day Recognition

Congratulations to **West Middle School student Éabha (AY-va) Klinksick (clink-sick)**, who received national recognition during the [2026 National History Day Contest](#).

Every state in the U.S. had students representing at the national competition, and more than half a million students participated in National History Day worldwide, with approximately 3,000 students advancing to the national competition.

Éabha earned the prestigious **Equality in History Prize**, presented annually to the project that best explores the history of human equality and recognizes individuals or organizations whose efforts advance equality for historically marginalized communities.

Her original spoken-word performance, **Breaking Ground: Womontown**, explored the founding of [Womontown](#) in Kansas City and was also selected as one of only thirteen student performances showcased at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

Reflecting on the recognition, Éabha shared:

This award really means a lot to me, because it's not only me that's being recognized, it's an entire town of women who changed history and fought for their rights. After their story went unnoticed for so long, I'm really happy that I got to be part of telling it and giving it the attention it has always deserved.

Spotlight on Special Education End-of-Year Update

As a part of our 'year in review,' I want to spotlight an update on our ongoing continuous improvement work in Special Education.

Special Education Highlights:

The primary focus of the 2025–2026 school year was strengthening the implementation of **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)** to ensure students with exceptionalities receive instruction and services aligned to their individual needs and IEPs, while maximizing access to the general education curriculum.

Key efforts centered on building the capacity of both principals and special education staff through targeted professional learning, coaching, guidance documents, and ongoing collaboration. To support implementation, the department:

- increased engagement with building leaders through:
- regular meetings, conducted individual meetings with special education teachers to identify barriers and support needs, and
- strengthened recruitment and retention efforts to build and maintain high-quality teams.

These actions improved alignment among student needs, instructional practices, and service delivery.

Moving forward, the focus will be on sustaining implementation, measuring the impact of these efforts on student outcomes, and continuing to strengthen staffing, instructional quality, and access to the general education curriculum for all students.

Additional highlights include:

- Implementation of a districtwide Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) professional learning series for special education staff through the Learning Exchange sessions.
- Increased collaboration between special education and building leadership teams through regular principal meetings, individual teacher meetings and shared monitoring processes.
- Expansion of early childhood programming to address increasing student needs and improve access to services.

Action Steps:

Throughout the year, the department implemented several strategic actions to support continuous improvement:

- Established regular meetings, over 350 in the 25-26 school year, between principals and district administrators focused on special education programming, student outcomes staffing, and compliance.
- In an effort to strengthen feedback loops, it was determined that the best way to begin this work would be to meet with each certified special education staff member individually. This important work began in early February 2026, and by the end of the 25-26 school year, members of the special education administrative team had met with over 90% of certified special education staff. This primes the focus on support for teachers that puts them in the best position to adequately support student needs, maintain the safety of all, and balance compliance requirements alongside the critical work of ensuring special education services are implemented and student needs are met.
- Implemented a centralized hiring process to improve staffing efficiency and ensure placement decisions were based on student need.
- Increased recruitment and retention efforts, specifically in hard-to-fill related service provider positions, and reduced the need for contract providers by over 50%. All related service providers are returning for the 26-27 school year, except for two retirements. Additionally, 6 additional related service providers have been directly hired as Lawrence Public Schools employees, instead of choosing to be hired through an outside contracting agency, yielding significant savings for the district.
 - 4 Speech Language Pathologists, and
 - 2 Occupational Therapists
- Expanded collaboration with building teams through a special education subcommittee meeting monthly to improve service delivery, staffing decisions, and problem-solving related to student needs. The committee is made up of 8 certified teachers/providers

from EC-12, 4 district special education administrators, 3 building principals (elementary, middle and high) and 1 board member. The subcommittee met for the first time on May 12th, and held a 2nd meeting on June 10th.

- During the 25-26 school year, the special education administrative team has responded to 6 Formal complaints filed by parents with the Kansas State Department of Education:
 - 1 of the 6 was resolved between the district and the parent prior to findings issued.
 - 3 of the 6 resulted in favor of the district.
 - 2 of the 6 are still in process.

Extended School Year Summer Support for Students

This summer, Lawrence Public Schools has continued providing **Extended School Year (ESY) services** to students whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams determined additional instruction and additional support was needed beyond the traditional school year.

Extended School Year special education services help eligible students with disabilities to maintain critical skills and continue progress toward their individualized education goals during the summer months, reducing the risk of significant regression between school years.

This summer, our ESY program:

- **Served 194 students**, from early childhood through age 21
- Involved **142 special education teachers, paraeducators, and related service providers**
- Achieved an **89.9% average student attendance**
- Services provided at **Community Connections at Pinckney, Prairie Park Elementary, Billy Mills Middle School, Free State High School, and Lawrence High School.**

Preparing for the 2026-27 School Year

New Educator Orientations Continue

This past week, the district **onboarded 35 certified educators**, including 23 new hires, 5 returning educators, and 7 educational support professionals who have transitioned into certified teaching positions.

These seven employees represent the district's continued commitment to developing talent from within and investing in staff members who choose to grow their careers while continuing to serve Lawrence students.

We are excited to welcome every new educator to Lawrence Public Schools and thank our Human Resources team for helping ensure our incoming staff members begin the school year prepared for success.

Professional Learning & Strategic Planning

Before welcoming students back in August, hundreds of Lawrence Public Schools employees will participate in professional learning, strategic planning, and collaborative work designed to strengthen teaching, learning, and student support across the district.

These opportunities provide valuable time for collaboration, planning, and professional growth, ensuring every school begins the year focused on student success.

Annual Student Enrollment

[Annual Student Enrollment for returning students is now open](#), and our Enrollment Center has been busy supporting families. Since the enrollment form opened on July 8th, **more than 3,000 returning students (~35%) have already completed this process.**

Completing annual enrollment during these summer weeks ensures students are 'on the record' and that our LPS team is well-prepared to welcome all students on day one.

We ask that everyone please complete **Annual Student Enrollment by July 31st** to ensure we have reserved your spot, and so that schools can update the most current student information.

Get Ready for Back-to-School Information

While district staff continue preparing classrooms and campuses, we encourage everyone to visit our [Back-to-School Hub](#)—a one-stop landing page designed to help families prepare.

There you will find important resources, including important dates, bus transportation request information, school supply lists, and more.

Completing these important steps now helps ensure students are ready for a smooth and successful first day of school.

Need Bus Transportation?

Lawrence Public Schools is proud to partner with Durham School Services to provide safe, reliable transportation. Families who need bus transportation for the 2026-27 school year are encouraged to visit the district's [Transportation webpage](#) to submit a transportation request. Requests are reviewed in accordance with district transportation eligibility guidelines and help staff finalize routes prior to the start of school. We kindly ask that, if possible, transportation requests are submitted by July 24th.

Douglas County Donation Drive

Lawrence Public Schools is proud to partner with United Way of Kaw Valley, neighboring Douglas County school districts, local businesses, and community volunteers through the annual [Douglas County Back2School Donation Drive](#).

Recently our district has purchased supplies to help relieve financial burden for parents, and to ensure classrooms at school are well equipped; annual donations such as the Douglas Country drive supplement our collective efforts to ensure all students begin the school year with supplies to support learning success.

In Lawrence, donated supplies will be distributed to students through the [Lawrence Schools Foundation's Kids Expo on August 8](#) and, for families unable to attend, through our schools. This remarkable community partnership helps remove barriers to learning before the school year even begins and reflects our community's shared commitment to supporting every student.

The photos on today's slide highlight the KU Athletics and Fleet Feet Lawrence donation of brand-new shoes to the Lawrence Schools Foundation.

Community members can support the drive by donating new school supplies or making an online financial contribution using the QR code shown on today's slide. Needed items include backpacks, notebooks, crayons, pencils, markers, tissues, headphones, folders, and other classroom essentials.

We are now 'on the countdown' to the first day of school coming up on August 13th; thanks in advance to all on our team, and everyone across our Lawrence community for all you are doing to ensure a strong opening to this 2026-27 school year.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this Superintendent Report, and for the honor of serving the Lawrence Public Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanice Kerr Swift".

Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Lawrence Public Schools